

Message Text

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ACTION EA-09

INFO OCT-01 EUR-12 ISO-00 CIAE-00 PM-04 H-02 INR-07 L-03

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R 100545Z OCT 75

FM AMEMBASSY VIENTIANE

TO SECSTATE WASHDC 5424

INFO AMEMBASSY BANGKOK

AMEMBASSY PARIS

AMCONSUL HONGKONG

DIA WASHDC

CINCPAC

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CINCPAC FOR POLAD

E.O. 11652 N/A

TAGS: PGOV, PINS, PINT, LA

SUBJECT DEMOCRATIC FREEDOM IN THE NEW CONJUNCTURE,
BONG SOUVANNAVONG

REF: VIENTIANE 5799 (DTG 301110Z SEP 75), NOTAL

SUMMARY. THE SEPTEMBER 28 ARREST OF BONG SOUVANNAVONG,
AND THE ACTIONS TAKEN SINCE THEN BY THE GOVERNMENT
AGAINST HIS LAO NATIONAL UNION PARTY, HAVE BEEN THE
SUBJECT OF CONSIDERABLE PRESS ATTENTION. ON OCTOBER 1
A LETTER TO THE INTERIOR MINISTRY FROM THE "MAYOR"
OF VIENTIANE WAS PUBLISHED ATTACKING BONG AND ASKING
THAT HIS PARTY BE DISSOLVED. ON OCTOBER 2 THE "DEPUTY
MAYOR" ATTACKED THE PARTY AND THE SOUVANNAVONG FAMILY.
ON OCTOBER 3, IT WAS ANNOUNCED BONG WOULD BE TRIED IN
CRIMINAL COURT. ON OCTOBER 7 THE INTERIOR MINISTRY
PUBLISHED AN ORDER FORBIDDING PARTY ACTIVITIES AND
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DISSOLVING THE PARTY NEWSPAPER. AN INTERIOR MINISTRY

OFFICIAL ADDED ON OCTOBER 8 THAT THE ACTUAL DISSOLUTION OF THE PARTY WOULD REQUIRE A ROYAL DECREE. END SUMMARY.

1. THE SEPTEMBER 28 ARREST OF BONG SOUVANNAVONG AND ACTIONS TAKEN AGAINST HIM AND HIS "LAO HOUAM SAMPHANH" (LAO NATIONAL UNION) PARTY HAVE BEEN THE SUBJECT OF CONSIDERABLE PRESS ATTENTION IN VIENTIANE. AS OF OCTOBER 10 BONG REMAINS IN PRISON AND HIS PARTY HAS BEEN EFFECTIVELY DISSOLVED. THE WHOLE EPISODE MAY CAUSE SOME LAO AND FOREIGN OBSERVERS WHO MIGHT HAVE BELIEVED THAT THE JUNE 1, 1974 "PROVISIONAL REGULATIONS ON GUARANTEEING DEMOCRATIC FREEDOMS," WHICH THE LAO PROVISIONAL GOVERNMENT OF NATIONAL UNION HAS ADOPTED AS LAW, REALLY GUARANTEED SUCH FREEDOM, TO RECONSIDER THEIR ASSUMPTION. IN DOING SO THEY MIGHT NOTE ARTICLE 20 OF THAT DOCUMENT WHICH MAKES PLAIN THAT THE EXERCISE OF ANY FREEDOMS CANNOT PREJUDICE "PUBLIC ORDER AND SECURITY" AND CANNOT "CONTRAVENE THE LINE OF PEACE, INDEPENDENCE, NEUTRALITY, DEMOCRACY, UNITY AND PROSPERITY." THE JUNE 1 DOCUMENT DOES NOT SAY WHO WILL DEFINE WHEN ANY ACTIVITY CONTRAVENES THE STRICTURES OF ARTICLE 20. APPARENTLY IT WILL BE THE LAO REVOLUTIONARY PARTY, THROUGH ITS "PEOPLE'S REVOLUTIONARY ADMINISTRATIONS" AND THE MINISTRY OF INTERIOR.

2. THE FIRST PUBLIC COMMENT ON BONG CAME IN THE OCTOBER 1 ISSUE OF XAT LAO WHICH PUBLISHED A SEPTEMBER 27 (PROBABLY BACKDATED) LETTER FROM VIENTIANE CITY PEOPLE'S REVOLUTIONARY COMMITTEE CHAIRMAN (MAYOR) PHAO PHIMPACHANH TO THE SECRETARY OF STATE FOR INTERIOR. PHAO ACCUSED THE NATIONAL UNION PARTY OF TRYING TO DESTROY PEACE AND NATIONAL CONCORD AND OF ATTACKING THE PGNU, THE JNPC, PRINCE SOUVANNA PHOUMA, THE LAO PATRIOTIC FRONT (WHICH IT ACCUSED OF BEING COMMUNIST), COUMMUNISM AND THE REVOLUTIONARY ADMINISTRATIONS THEMSELVES. PHAO ASKED THAT THE PARTY BE DISSOLVED AND THAT ITS NEWSPAPER BE PROSCRIBED. XAT LAO ALSO NOTED THAT SEVERAL THOUSAND PEOPLE GATHERED ON SEPTEMBER 30 TO DENOUNCE BONG AND HIS PARTY. (COMMENT: THEY WERE IN FACT SUPPORTING HIM AGAINST THE PGNU'S ACTION.)

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3. THE OCTOBER 2 XAT LAO QUOTED TEM DETVONGSA, PHAO'S DEPUTY, AS STATING THAT THE LAO NATIONAL UNION PARTY OPPOSED PEACE AND ITS NEWSPAPER PUBLISHED NEWS AIMED AT CAUSING PANIC AND FLIGHT AMONG THE POPULATION. HE ALSO DESCRIBED BONG AS COMING FROM A FEUDAL AND REACTIONARY FAMILY.

4. ON OCTOBER 3, SOMVANG SENESATHIT, THE SECRETARY OF STATE FOR JUSTICE, SAID THAT BONG SHOULD BE TRIED IN A CRIMINAL COURT FOR (A) DESTROYING PEACE; (B) OPPOSING THE PEOPLE'S REVOLUTIONARY POWER; (C) MAKING TROUBLE; AND (D) BEING A TRAITOR TO THE NATION. THE VIENTIANE POST OF OCTOBER 3 REPORTED THAT THIRTY-SIX OF THE SEVENTY PARTY MEMBERS WHO HAD BEEN ARRESTED HAD BEEN FREED. ACCORDING TO SIMVONG DOUANGKEO, CHIEF OF THE JUDICIAL SERVICE OF THE PROVINCIAL POLICE, BEFORE THEY WERE FREED HE (SIMVONG) EXPLAINED TO THEM WHY BONG HAD BEEN ARRESTED, THE PARTY PAPER DISSOLVED AND ITS PRESS CONFISCATED. AMONG OTHER REASONS, BONG: (A) DID NOT RESPECT THE PRIME MINISTER, THE CHAIRMAN OF THE JNPC AND THE KING; (B) SERVED THE INTERESTS OF IMPERIALISM (BOTH FRENCH AND AMERICAN); (C) OPPOSED THE 1945 STRUGGLE FOR INDEPENDENCE; (D) TRIED TO BECOME PRIME MINISTER; AND (E) COLLABORATED WITH PHOUI SANANIKONE IN THE ASSASSINATION OF QUINIM PHOLSENA.

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TO SECSTATE WASHDC 5425
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AMEMBASSY PARIS
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5. IN THE OCTOBER 4 VIENTIANE POST, SIMVONG DOUANGKEO ANNOUNCED THAT FIVE IMPORTANT MEMBERS OF THE LAO NATIONAL UNION PARTY OTHER THAN BONG WERE STILL BEING HELD. THESE INCLUDED SAKKALINETHONE SOUVANNAVONG, ONE OF BONG'S SONS, AND SISOUPHANH VONGSAY, THE PARTY'S 2ND VICE PRESIDENT. THE FIRST VICE PRESIDENT WAS STILL BEING SOUGHT.

6. ON OCTOBER 7 THE INTERIOR MINISTRY PUBLISHED AN ORDER STATING THAT, PENDING ISSUANCE OF A ROYAL ORDINANCE DISSOLVING THE LAO NATIONAL UNION PARTY: (A) ALL PARTY MEMBERS WERE FORBIDDEN FROM TAKING ANY ACTION DIRECTED TOWARD SABOTAGING PEACE AND NATIONAL CONCORD; (B) ALL PARTY CARDS WERE TO BE TURNED IN TO THE POLICE; (C) ALL PARTY PUBLICATIONS PREJUDICIAL TO THE STABILITY OF THE PGNU WERE SEIZED; AND (D) THE PARTY'S PRESS WAS FORBIDDEN TO EDIT ANY NEWS-PAPER OR DOCUMENT AIMING AT CRITICIZING THE GOVERNMENT LIMITED OFFICIAL USE

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OR SOWING DISCORD IN THE POPULATION.

7. XAT LAO ON OCTOBER 8 QUOTED BOUNPHONE PHAMTHAVONG, DIRECTOR OF POLITICAL AFFAIRS AT THE INTERIOR MINISTRY, AS SAYING THAT THE ABOVE-MENTIONED ORDER WAS BEING CARRIED OUT. ACCORDING TO BOUNPHONE, THE INTERIOR MINISTRY COULD DISSOLVE THE PARTY NEWSPAPER BUT NOT THE PARTY ITSELF; THAT WOULD TAKE A ROYAL ORDINANCE. SIMVONG ANNOUNCED IN THE SAME NEWSPAPER THAT BONG AND THE PRINCIPAL OFFICIALS OF THE PARTY WERE BEING HELD AT SAMKHE PRISON; THAT OTHER ARRESTED PARTY MEMBERS WERE IMPRISONED AT DONGDOK; AND THAT STILL OTHERS WERE BEING SOUGHT.

8. COMMENT: GIVEN THE LACK OF IMPORTANCE OF BONG AND HIS PARTY, THE PUBLIC ATTENTION FOCUSED ON HIS ARREST AND ITS DEMISE WOULD APPEAR DISPROPORTIONATE. THE COMMUNIST AUTHORITIES MAY BELIEVE, HOWEVER, THAT BY MAKING AN EXAMPLE OF BONG THEY WILL HAVE LESS TROUBLE IN BRINGING TO HEEL THE OTHER NON-COMMUNIST ORGANIZATIONS WHICH CONTINUE TO EXIST IN VIENTIANE. NONE HAS CAUSED ANY SIGNIFICANT DIFFICULTIES THUS FAR, BUT THE COMMUNISTS MAY WISH TO OBTAIN RESISTANCE WHEN THE TIME COMES FOR THE DISSOLUTION OF THOSE ORGANIZATIONS OR THEIR INTEGRATION INTO THE COMMUNIST SYSTEM.
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